

Dime-sized California gold: Is it phony or is it a find?

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE ANSWERS to more questions from Tribune readers.

Q — I have a coin the size of a dime with the words "California gold without alloy." On the other side is "N G & N 1849." Is it a rare commemorative?

— R. M., Villa Park

A — In the mid-1800s, many private companies minted their own coins, usually to relieve shortages of government coins. Collectors often refer to such items as California gold, since most of them were produced in the West.

Over the years, thousands of businessmen have produced fake California gold coins for use as souvenirs or in an attempt to fool collectors. You should have your piece examined by an expert; genuine California gold coins are quite valuable.

Q — Is there any truth to the rumor that Uncle Sam will replace dimes and quarters with paper money? — R. S., Chicago

A — No. If anything, the government will go in the other direction,

replacing \$1 bills with the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin.

Q — For years, I've owned a \$1 bill with a yellow reverse side and last week I came across another such bill. Is there any value to them? — D. C., Ottawa

A — No. The green ink on U.S. paper money is produced by mixing yellow and blue inks. When a bill is rubbed with soap or another alkali substance, the blue ink is often destroyed, making the color turn yellow.

Q — Is a 1922 silver dollar with the word "trust" spelled "trvst" special?

— S. H., Chicago

A — No. The spelling is normal on all Peace dollars made from 1921 to 1935; it is a throwback to ancient times when the letter "U" looked like a "V."

Do you have questions about coins and collecting? Send them to Roger Boye, c/o Arts and Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.